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Cuban Exiles Had Best Be Wary

THE anti-Castro Cuban exiles in Florida are, as an article from Thayer Waldo elsewhere on this page makes clear, a downcast and despairing lot. It would be pardonable if they were a bit confused, too.

After being given the back of Uncle Sam's hand for months, they are now suddenly being wooed, Waldo reports, by both the Castro regime and a friend of Bobby Kennedy. But is it, in either case, true love?

Che Guevara, one of Castro's right-hand men, is rumored to be staging a quiet but intense campaign to lure back to Communist Cuba a considerable number of exiles—particularly technicians, professional men and small businessmen.

The bait: A promise to return or pay for all confiscated property, and to establish a Lenin-style "New Economic Policy," which would free small business, the professions and technical work from state control.

Apparently as a counter-move, a Maj. Enrique Ruiz Williams, former Bay of Pigs prisoner and reputedly a close friend of Atty. Gen. Bobby Kennedy, is buttonholing other exile leaders, urging them to unite their factions. If they do, Williams promises that the Central Intelligence Agency will supply arms, money, equipment and staging areas for a new invasion attempt.

Any Cuban who knows his Russian history will shy away from the New Economic Policy. This policy, known then as NEP, was promulgated by Lenin in 1921 after civil war and Bolshevik economic bungling had nearly ruined the Russian economy.

Under the New Economic Policy, which lasted until 1928, Soviet peasants were permitted to raise about what they liked on their land, subject to a 10 per cent tax paid

in produce, and small businessmen were allowed to flourish. Under this partial capitalism—the state retained control of heavy industry—the Soviet economy did return almost to the levels of 1918.

But then Stalin, fearing this small wedge of capitalism and freedom might undermine his newly won power, and that of the Communist party, threw out the whole concept, nationalized everything and killed, sent to Siberia or left to starve millions of kulaks (peasant farmers) and small businessmen.

Even during the seven years of the New Economic Policy, the kulaks were pariahs in Soviet society. Their children were barred from universities and high schools and the kulaks themselves were barred from voting or any administrative office and denied any benefits of social legislation.

A Cuban NEP should not entice many informed exiles.

BUT what of the reported U.S. offer of CIA aid for a new invasion attempt, if the exiles will somehow unite themselves?

For weeks, the Kennedy Administration has been sneering at anyone who mentioned that dirty word, "invasion." And only last week, the Senate Preparedness subcommittee reported that top U.S. intelligence officials figure it would take a major amphibious assault, coordinated with a paratroop attack, to overcome Castro's Russian-aided defenses.

Obviously, the Cuban exiles themselves aren't going to be able to mount a show of that scope—and they have been given little reason to expect further help from the administration. They could be pardoned for wondering now what hooks there are in each side's bait.